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ABSTRACT

Criteria and procedures are proposed for the review of proposed associate degree or other sub-baccalaureate certificate or degree programs in Alabama's state four-year colleges. Background information, including the approval of an associate degree award for a two-year certificate program at Livingston University, is reviewed. Initially, it was agreed that public four-year colleges should refrain from granting the associate degree as general recognition of the completion of the first 2 years of a baccalaureate program. Criteria for the review of proposed programs include the following: a demonstrated social need and student demand for the program exists; the program requires few if any new courses, faculty, or facilities; tuition will be no lower than that required for the general baccalaureate program; and admissions policies will remain the same. It is also suggested that procedures and guidance relative to certificate/degrees of the technical college system and their interface with both two- and four-year institutions should be developed and included in this policy. (SW)

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Alabama

ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA FOR REVIEW OF PROPOSED TWO-YEAR AND OTHER SUB-BACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS IN SENIOR INSTITUTIONS

BY

THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON TWO-YEAR AND OTHER SUB-BACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS IN SENIOR INSTITUTIONS

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Introduction

The awarding of an associate degree after two years' collegiate work has, especially in Alabama, been associated with junior colleges. Throughout the nation, however, there are numerous four-year institutions which have for some time awarded associate degrees.[1] In addition, some four-year institutions have long had two-year certificate programs which are often equivalent to associate degree programs in the junior colleges. In Alabama there already exists a number of associate degree or two-year certificate programs in four-year institutions. For example, The University of Alabama in Birmingham offers a wide range of two-year certificate programs in health-related fields. Alabama A&M offers associate degree options in twelve technological fields, while Troy State offers associate degrees in criminal justice, business, computer science, air traffic control, aviation operations, and nursing. Livingston also offers an associate degree in nursing and in secretarial science. The University of Alabama in Huntsville offers "associate certificate" programs of two years' duration in child development, law enforcement, and interior decoration. Other public four-year institutions also offer sub-baccalaureate certificate programs of less than two years' duration--for example, The University of Alabama (University) and Jacksonville State in law enforcement. In addition, there are certificate, diploma, or associate degree programs in four of the private four-year institutions in Alabama.

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[1] "Though by far the greater number of associate's degrees are conferred by junior colleges, a large number of four-year institutions award them..." Handbook of College and University Administration--Academic, edited by Asa A. Knowles (New York, 1970), p. 2-208. See also James W. Thornton, Jr., The Community Junior College, 3rd edition (New York, 1972), p. 51, for a discussion of the associate degree's origins in a four-year institution.

The associate degree was first and most commonly used to recognize completion of the first two years of a standard four-year college curriculum. In an age when there was widespread agreement upon the nature of "general education," the associate degree was awarded in those programs which led to easy transfer to a senior institution. As the scope of the junior college curriculum broadened, however, the degree of associate in applied science was increasingly awarded in terminal occupational programs, which were not necessarily designed for transfer to a four-year institution.

Although, logically, there is no reason for students in a four-year institution who complete two years of general education that in a junior college would qualify for an associate degree to be denied such recognition simply because they chose to attend a four-year institution, Alabama's public senior institutions have not awarded the associate degree as standard recognition of completion of the first two years of general education requirements. Nonetheless, for certain types of programs, as shown above, the associate degree has been utilized by four-year institutions in the State.

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education has received requests for approval of a small number of two-year programs in public universities in the last year. It is timely, then to establish a general policy statement on such programs. For this reason, the Commission asked a committee of three junior college presidents and three university presidents joined by the respective chairmen (at that time) of the Council of Junior College Presidents and the Council of University Presidents to provide the Commission with advice and counsel in developing such a policy statement. The work of this committee has gone far to demonstrate that through a mature and rational approach and with the cooperation and good will of all concerned the educational community can make significant progress toward a more effectively coordinated system of higher education in Alabama.

Background in Alabama

Most of the associate degree and certificate programs in Alabama's public universities predate the organization of the Commission on Higher Education. The question of new associate degree programs at four-year institutions first arose in the spring of 1974. At its meeting of May 30, 1974, the Commission approved the request of Livingston University to recognize completion of the long-standing two-year certificate program in secretarial science with an associate degree. At the same time, the Commission approved the offering of an associate degree in certain health-related fields in conjunction with the Regional Technical Institute at UAB. The staff and the Commission were aware that the new administration at Livingston had given consideration to the development of a number of new programs, including two-year programs, better designed to meet the broad range of needs of all Alabama citizens living within the primary service area of Livingston. Livingston is an historically and predominantly white institution located in an area of sizeable black population. Per capita income in the area is low, and there is no nearby junior college. Under these circumstances, the new administration of Livingston quite rightly undertook to examine ways in which the traditional role and scope of Livingston might be enhanced in order best to meet the changed circumstances of the 1970's and the specific needs of the people who live within the institution's primary service area.

In approving the Livingston request, the Commission noted that:

(1) the proposed program did not involve the addition of either faculty or courses, and

(2) since Livingston is located in an area of the State that does not have a state junior college in the immediate vicinity, the proposed program would in no way represent unnecessary duplication of either programs or facilities.

Some of the proposed programs which the Commission has since received raise questions and considerations not covered by these precepts -- thus the need for this joint committee to provide advice and counsel to the Commission in the development of a comprehensive policy concerning the development of associate degree programs in public universities in the State.

While it may be clear that logic, history, or current practice will not support a complete bar on two-year programs in four-year institutions, nonetheless some generally accepted guidelines are needed if all our institutions are to discharge fully their mandate to meet the educational needs of our citizens without undue and wasteful duplication. There is no rigid and universally accepted line separating the academic from the vocational, the transfer from the terminal, or the precise role of the junior colleges from that of the university. Nonetheless, among two-year programs, most are more appropriately offered by junior colleges alone. By the same token, there may be some two-year programs which require a concentration of resources already possessed by a senior institution as part of an existing baccalaureate or graduate program, a concentration of specialized resources and/or expertise that would be prohibitive in cost for a junior college to assemble. There may be other instances in which a two-year or other sub-baccalaureate program would be appropriate in a four-year institution. It is the Committee's belief that it would be helpful for all concerned if there were clearly understood and generally accepted criteria by which such proposed programs would be evaluated. We could thus avoid the debilitating hostility and suspicion that, in the absence of mutually accepted criteria, might arise through an uncoordinated, piecemeal approach.

Initial Considerations

The Committee began its deliberations by agreeing on two points:

(1) that it would be best if the public universities of the state refrained

from granting the associate degree as general recognition of the completion of the first two years of a baccalaureate program.

(2) that it would be best if there could be developed a mutually accepted set of procedures and criteria by which proposals for specific associate degree programs and other sub-baccalaureate certificate or degree programs in four-year institutions would be reviewed and evaluated.

The Committee also recognized the need for the development of procedures and criteria for Commission review of proposed programs in junior colleges and for their coordination with the total system of higher education in the state but believed that this matter should be separately addressed. In that task close cooperation with the new Superintendent of Education will be essential. Whatever procedures and criteria are eventually developed must take into account the unique role of junior colleges, the constitutional and statutory responsibilities of the State Board of Education, and the particular needs of a system of institutions governed by one board.

Criteria

The following criteria for the review of proposed associate degree or other sub-baccalaureate certificate or degree programs in the state's public universities are proposed for adoption by the Commission:

(1) that there should be a demonstrated social need and student demand for the program.

(2) that the program should represent merely an additional exit point in an existing program, requiring few if any new courses, faculty, or facilities.

(3) that tuition for students enrolled in the programs generally shall be no lower than that required for the general baccalaureate program. (There are or may be, however, partnership programs established between

two- and four-year institutions which may involve tuition levels that differ from those in the general baccalaureate program.)

(4) that there should be no change in admissions policies.

(5) that exceptions to criteria (2), (3), and (4) above may be deemed acceptable if the proposed program is not available in a junior college in the immediate service area and/or if the proposed program represents a concentration of resources that the senior institution already possesses as part of an existing program, a concentration of resources which would likely be prohibitive in cost for the junior colleges in the area to assemble to offer the associate degree alone. It should be understood, however, that the initial presumption shall be that associate degree and other sub-baccalaureate certificate or degree programs are more appropriately offered by junior colleges.

Suggested Procedures

The following procedure for the review of associate degree or other sub-baccalaureate certificate or degree programs is recommended for adoption by the Commission:

(1) after the proposed program has completed all internal requirements for program review, the university shall submit the proposed program directly to the Commission staff. The university is strongly encouraged to discuss with the junior colleges in its immediate vicinity the nature of the proposed program and should include in the proposal an indication of whether this has been done and, if so, a statement of the positions of the junior colleges concerned.

(2) using criteria adopted by the Commission, the Commission staff shall review and evaluate the proposed program. (These criteria shall be adopted by the Commission only after securing the advice and counsel

of this Committee, of the presidents of the junior colleges and the State Superintendent, and of the presidents of the universities.)

(3) the staff shall recommend to the Commission that, based on the adopted criteria, the program should or should not be implemented. A copy of the staff recommendation shall be made available to the institution proposing the program, to the State Department staff, and to the junior colleges in the immediate vicinity of the proposing institution at least one week prior to the Commission meeting in which the proposed program will be acted upon. All interested parties shall be invited to appear before the Commission at that time.

(4) at the end of the first year of operation under the adopted criteria and procedures, this same Committee, with the addition of one representative from the Council of Technical College Presidents, shall review the criteria and the procedures to recommend any changes in either that are deemed appropriate. Further, procedures and guidance relative to certificate/degrees of the Technical College System and their interface with both two-and four-year institutions should be developed and included in this policy. Subsequently, a similar review shall be undertaken at any time upon the request of the Council of Junior College Presidents or of the Council of University Presidents.